

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of enabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:
 - receiving a request to enable said software option;
 - authorizing said enablement;
 - delivering a first enabling signal to an intermediary; and
 - delivering a second enabling signal to said machine in response to said first enabling signal.
2. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein said intermediary authenticates said enabling signal.
3. A method, as set forth in claim 2, wherein the step of delivering said second signal further comprises the step of delivering said second signal in response to said authenticating said first enabling signal.
4. A method, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - establishing a machine specific configuration; and
 - generating said software option request in response to said machine specific configuration.
5. A method, as set forth in claim 4, further comprising the step of delivering said second enabling signal to a controller located on said machine.
6. A method, as set forth in claim 4, wherein said request is generated by a software program needing said software option.

7. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of delivering said second signal further comprises the step of delivering said second signal to a plurality of controllers located on said remote machine.

8. A method, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the step of:

initiating a billing process in response to said authorization.

9. A method, as set forth in claim 9, further comprising the step of:

determining if one of an entitlement and a credit is available in response to said billing process initiation.

10. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of authorizing said enablement further comprises the step of:

authorizing said enablement in response to an entitlement associated with said software option.

11. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein said intermediary is a gateway network.

12. A method, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the step of generating said request in response to a controller failing.

13. A method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein said request includes a failed controller characteristic and a replacement controller characteristic.

14. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of authorizing said enablement further includes the step of authorizing said enablement for a time period.

15. A method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of receiving said request further comprises the step of receiving said request from a dealer associated with said machine.

16. A method, as set forth in claim 15, wherein the step of authorizing said enablement further includes the step of authorizing said enablement by a manufacturer associated with said machine.

17. A method, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the step of generating a request to enable said software option by a first machine.

18. A method, as set forth in claim 17, further comprising the step of disabling said software option on a second machine in response to said enablement authorization.

19. A method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein the step of delivering said first enabling signal further comprises the step of delivering said first enabling signal in response to said disabling of said software option.

20. A method, as set forth in claim 17, further comprising the step of scheduling a delivery of said first enabling signal.

21. A method, as set forth in claim 20, wherein the step of scheduling said delivery further comprises the step of scheduling said delivery in response to a priority of said request.

22. A method, as set forth in claim 21, wherein the step of scheduling said delivery further comprises the step of scheduling said delivery in response to a priority of said request and a priority associated with a current use of said software option.

23. A method, as set forth in claim 17, further comprising the step of delivering a notification to said first machine, said notification including an indication of when said request may be fulfilled.

24. A method of enabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

- receiving a request to enable said software option;
- authorizing said request;
- delivering an enabling signal to said remote machine;
- distributing at least a portion of said enabling signal to a plurality of controllers located on said remote machine.

25. A method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein said software option is associated with said plurality of processors.

26. A method, as set forth in claim 25, wherein the step of delivering an enabling signal to said remote machine further comprises the step of delivering said enabling signal to a primary processor, and further wherein said primary processor delivers a second enabling signal to said at least one other processor.

27. A method of enabling a software option located on a replacement processor of a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

identifying a failed processor associated with said replacement processor;

receiving a request to enable said software option;

authorizing said request in response to said identified failed processor; and

delivering an enabling signal to said replacement processor in response to said authorization.

28. A method, as set forth in claim 27, wherein said request includes at least one of a failed controller identifier and a replacement controller identifier.

29. A method, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the step of authorizing said request includes the steps of:

authenticating said failed controller identifier and said replacement controller identifier, and confirming the requested software option was enabled on said failed controller.

30. A method of providing an entitlement for an enabled software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to disable said software option;
disabling said software option;
receiving a disabled characteristic associated with said software option;
establishing an entitlement in response to said disabled characteristic.

31. A method, as set forth in claim 30, wherein said entitlement is associated with said disabled software option.

32. A method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising the step of authenticating said disabled characteristic.

33. A method, as set forth in claim 30, wherein the step of establishing an entitlement further comprises the step of establishing said entitlement in response to said authentication.

34. A method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to enable a software option on a second machine; and
authorizing said request in response to said entitlement.

35. A method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

authenticating said request in response to a controller characteristic and a software option status; and
generating a disable signal in response to said authentication.

36. A method, as set forth in claim 35, wherein the step of disabling said software option further comprises the step of disabling said software option in response to said disable signal and a machine status.

37. A method, as set forth in claim 36, wherein said machine status includes one of power up and power down.

38. A method, as set forth in claim 36, wherein said machine status includes an implement status.

39. A method of enabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to enable said software option;
enabling said software option during a trial period;
notifying a user with respect to an expiration of said trial period;
receiving a request to enable said software option in response to said notification;
authorizing said request;
delivering an enabling signal to said remote machine.

40. A method, as set forth in claim 39, further comprising the step of generating a disable signal in response to said trial period expiration.

41. A method, as set forth in claim 40, wherein the step of disabling said software option further comprises the step of disabling said software option in response to said disable signal and a machine status.

42. A method, as set forth in claim 41, wherein said machine status includes one of power up and off.

43. A method of disabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to disable said software option;
disabling said software option; and
receiving a disabled characteristic associated with said software option.

44. A method of enabling a software option located on a remote customer machine, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request by a manufacturer from a dealer to enable said software option;

authorizing said request in response to a dealer characteristic and a machine characteristic; and

delivering an enabling signal to said remote machine.

45. A method, as set forth in claim 44, wherein the step of delivering an enabling signal to said remote machine further comprises the steps of:

delivering an enabling signal to said dealer in response to said authorization; and

delivering said enabling signal to said remote machine in response to said dealer receipt.

46. A method as set forth in claim 44, wherein said dealer characteristic includes at least one of a service tool identifier, a service representative identifier, a dealer identifier, and a cross reference identifier of said dealer and said customer.

47. A method, as set forth in claim 46, wherein said machine characteristic includes at least one of a software option identifier, a processor identifier, and a configuration identifier.

48. A method, as set forth in claim 44, wherein said step of authorization further includes the step of authorizing said request in response to a machine characteristic, a dealer characteristic, and a user characteristic.

49. A method of enabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising the steps of:

establishing a machine specific configuration;

generating a request to enable said software option in response to said machine specific configuration, said request being authorized at a remote location;

receiving an enabling signal at said machine in response to said authorization.

50. A method of enabling a software option located on a first machine, comprising the steps of:

establishing a need for said software option on said first machine;
delivering a request for said software option to a second machine;
disabling said software option on said second machine in response to said request;

generating an enabling signal in response to said disablement; and
enabling said software option on said first machine in response to said enabling signal.

51. A system configured to enabling a software option located on a remote machine, comprising;

a controller located on said remote machine, said controller being configured to generate a request to enable said software option;

a remote facility configured to receive said request, authorize said request and generate a first enabling signal; and

an intermediary configured to receive said first enabling signal, authenticate said signal, and responsively deliver a second enabling signal to said machine in response to said first enabling signal.